

R E M A R K S

This is in response to the Office Action that was mailed on July 31, 2006. Claims 1 and 6 are amended to more particularly point out the feature of the invention that involves stopping conveyance based upon failure of a sheet detector to detect a sheet or sheet product. Claim 18 is amended to refer to sheet detectors at entrance and exit sides of a branch path, and claim 20 is accordingly cancelled, without prejudice. The features of claims 24 and 25 are incorporated into claim 21, and claims 24 and 25 are cancelled, without prejudice. Claim 26 is amended to more particularly point out the feature of the invention that involves comparing the number of sorted sheets and the number of wrapped/packaged sheets when conveyance of the sheets is stopped. New claims 27 and 28, which depend from claims 1 and 6 respectively, recite calculation features in accordance with former claims 24 and 25. No new matter is introduced by this Amendment. With this Amendment, claims 1, 6, 7, 18, 21, 22, and 26-28 are pending in the application.

Claims 1, 6, and 7 were rejected under the second paragraph of 35 U.S.C. §112 as failing to define the invention properly. The Examiner argued that the phrase "the predetermined time" in claims 1 and 6 lacked proper antecedent basis. Claims 1 and 6 have been

amended to address this issue. It is respectfully submitted that this ground of rejection is overcome by the present amendment of claims 1 and 6.

THE INVENTION. In the present invention, sheet detectors are disposed at an entrance side and exit sides of a branch path. Conveyance or manufacture of sheets or of processed products of the sheets is stopped if passage of the sheets or the processed products of the sheets is not detected by a sheet detector (at one of the exit sides of the branch path toward which the sheets or the processed products of the sheets are conveyed) after a predetermined time after another sheet detector at the entrance side of the branch path detects passage of the sheets or processed products of the sheets. This is illustrated for instance in Figure 4B, step 150 (discussed in the last full paragraph on page 27 of the specification) and in step 104 in Figure 4A. Accordingly, conveyance or manufacture is stopped quickly when a failure occurs in any branch path. Therefore, the time necessary for searching for missing sheets or processed products of sheets is reduced, and higher production efficiency is enabled.

Claims 1, 6, 7, 18, and 20-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over JP 09-124200 in view of US 5,507,134 to Takeda et al. ("Takeda"). The rejection is

respectfully traversed. We note that JP-124900 was issued to Masao TSURUTA et al. Accordingly that reference will be referred to hereinafter as "Tsuruta".

The Examiner admits that Tsuruta does not disclose stopping conveyance or manufacture, e.g. on page 3 of the Office Action.

Takeda discloses that a leading edge of a package 3 crawls under a trailing edge of a preceding package 3, and overlapping packages 3 are adjusted. Takeda discloses only stopping the package at a predetermined position in a conveyance path from 5A to 30 (Figures 15-18, column 9, line 46 - column 10, line 25). Takeda does not disclose or teach (A) branch paths and (B) conveyance or manufacture of sheets or processed products of the sheets being stopped if passage of the sheets or the processed products of the sheets is not detected by a sheet detector at one of the exit sides of the branch path toward which the sheets or the processed products of the sheets are conveyed, after a predetermined time after another sheet detector at the entrance side of the branch path detects the passage of the sheets or the processed products of the sheets.

Accordingly, the combination of Takeda with Tsuruta fails to teach or suggest all of the features of the present invention.

In the paragraph bridging pages 3-4 of the Office Action, the Examiner purports to take "Official Notice" of the general "fact" that "stopping conveyance of products in one section of

manufacturing machine is old". Assertions of specific knowledge of the prior art must always be supported by citation to some reference, and that accordingly the purported Official Notice is improper under the guidelines set forth in MPEP 2144.03. Moreover, even if stopping conveyance of products in one section of a manufacturing machine is considered to be "old", the combination of Takeda with Tsuruta still fails to teach or suggest all of the features of the present invention.


CLAIMS 21 AND 26-28. In the present invention as defined in claims 21 and 26-28, the number of collected sheets and the number of calculated produced sheets are compared when conveyance is stopped. Accordingly, with this embodiment of the present invention, as discussed in the last full paragraph on page 27 of the specification, one can know where a failure or an abnormality has occurred, and the time necessary for searching for missing sheets or processed products of the sheets is shortened, thereby avoiding lowered production efficiency. The combination of Takeda with Tsuruta fails to teach or suggest this feature of the present invention as well.

Applicants respectfully submit that each of claims 1, 6, 7, 18, 21, 22, and 26-28 defines an invention that differs materially, beneficially, and unobviously from any combination of technology placed in the possession of persons of ordinary skill in the art by the Tsuruta and Takeda references. Accordingly, withdrawal of the

rejection of record - and passage of this application to Issue - is in order and is earnestly solicited.

Please contact Richard Gallagher (Reg. No. 28,781) at (703) 205-8008 with any questions concerning the present application.

Respectfully submitted,
BIRCH, STEWART, KOLASCH & BIRCH, LLP

By 

Marc S. Weiner, #32,181

MSW/RG
1982-0207P

P.O. Box 747
Falls Church, VA 22040-0747
(703) 205-8000